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THE FOREST SERVICE

History Line

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To: History Coordinators
Forest Service Personnel

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EXPERIMENT STATION

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Some remarkable people have been employees of the Forest Service--to say nothing of those still on active duty. If you had read his syndicated newspaper column as avidly as I, and sat captivated through the hour-long Eric Severide TV interview sometimes back with the San Francisco longshoreman-philosopher, you would have been as interested as I at discovering that Eric Hoffer is a retiree of the Forest Service. He worked not briefly or spasmodically, but for a long career--42 years--for the Engineering Division in Region 5. And then expressed regret at not being able to stay on until the mandatory retirement age--which is 70, if any think they can make it. An article by Hoffer is in ENGINEERING IN THE FOREST SERVICE, a compilation of history and memoirs by the WO Division of Engineering, 1969, gathered under the leadership of the recently-retired Director, Jim Byrne. The now-famous philosopher had high praise for Clare Hendee, Tony Dean, Jim Byrne, and others he had worked for in the RO, as well as some pertinent remarks about people who supervise others. Just why Hoffer became known as a longshoreman rather than a Forest Service man is something of a mystery, but there it is.

The man who invented CARE, the idea of the packages, that is, is a Forest Service retiree--Arthur Ringland--though he, quite typically, gives the credit to President Herbert Hoover. Ringland lives here in D.C. and often lunches at the Cosmos Club. He achieved a distinguished career in the Forest Service and then the State Department, covering nearly half a century. He was assigned by Gifford Pinchot in 1908 to be the first District (now Regional) Forester of R-3 where he served until 1916. In World War I, he was the adjutant of the forestry regiment, the U.S. Army 10th Engineers, under the command of Col. James Woodruff, a West Pointer of the Corps of Engineers who later became a Major General. After the war, Ringland moved to the State Department where he worked with the American Relief Administration, serving as Chief of mission in Czechoslovakia, in the task of feeding the hungry of Europe. He still enjoys telling how the 10th Engineers took a goat to France as a mascot, had it captured in England by a band of Marines. The next night the engineers counter-attached, recaptured the goat, and took it on to France. Nobody got the forestry regiment's goat, not permanently anyway.

Benton MacKaye, another Forest Service alumnus, was a pioneer regional planner, now living in Shirley Center, Mass., the "father" of the Appalachian Trail, and (so far as we can determine) the first to advance the idea of Interstate highways or freeways. An article of his titled "The Townless Highways" was published in the New Republic March 12, 1930. If it turns out that he was not the first to advance this concept, we shall gladly correct the record. He is an innovator, thinker, and writer of distinction, more so (in our opinion) than he has received credit for. Mainly for one reason: his most recent book: From Geography to Geotechnics, University of Illinois Press, 1968. Anyone who has any interest in the present enviromental wave shouldn't miss it. It is must reading. It is a classic!

We are aware that all of the outstanding men and women of the Forest Service are not retirees, that there are many others, including the recent wave that left who are equally deserving of high praise. But we can't write a book about them all right now.

Response to History Line and the history program in general has been highly gratifying and not entirely surprising. We are fast finding that Forest Service employees and particularly retirees (there should be a better name for them) are deeply interested in FS history, and seem to greet any activity in this area with enthusiasm and open arms. Some sample notes: "It was quite interesting to read in History Line that the Forest Service was the first to build a bulldozer. The publication of items like this should add to our espirt de corps, the backbone of the Forest Service"--Bob Pearl, TM, WO. From the Organization of American Historians (OAH): "I doubt you knew when you wrote to me that I am head-over-heels in forestry matters. I operate considerable timber stands in South Carolina and Kentucky, and I could not be more interested in forestry if I were a professional forester. I have felt that there is entirely too much neglect of the role of forestry in the history of the United States. I wish I were starting over again. I would put some doctoral candidates to writing dissertations in this field."--Dr. Thomas D. Clark, Executive Secretary, OAH. Larry Mays, now a builder in Atlanta, sends a photograph of radio No. 7 (the first six were identical) which he was using in July, 1930, at Spirit Lake, Columbia NF (now Gifford Pinchot) and promises more of this early history of FS use of radios. More on this later.

This issue of History Line carries the file designation 1680, which is the number the new history Manual Chapter will carry. This little oversight regarding the first issue was called to our attention, along with other constructive suggestions, by Wayne R. Nicolls, I&E Staff Officer, Shawnee NF and Mark Boesch, Press Officer, R-9. Their other suggestion and action concerning Breaking New Ground. They are polling personnel in their areas to see how many would be interested in buying a copy of the book--if we can persuade the publisher to bring out a new edition. Excellent idea! Let us know how the polls come out, and we'll contact the publisher to further this proposal. History Line is hereby converted into an opinion poll for the same purpose: please drop us a line if you would buy a new copy of the book. The appeal did turn up one mint copy right here in the WO--for which we are most grateful. Retiring Associate Chief Art Greeley presented the history branch with a very special copy--the one given to him by his father, former Chief William B. Greeley. The inscription said: "A.W. Greeley: In commemoration of the great Service in which we have both been privileged to have a part." Signed: W.B. Greeley. In presenting the book to the History Branch, Art set only one condition: that we get a photograph of the inscription and return it to him. This has been done.

We got a trace on another copy of Breaking New Ground through Art Carhart, now living at Hilltop Chateau, Lemon Grove, Cal., hard at work on a new book on the origin of the wilderness idea. We are also following up on this lead.

What's in a name? In looking over the names of men who have been Chief of the Service, an interesting fact jumps out at you: Nine men have held the position. Of the nine, five, or more than half, had double letters in their names. These were Gifford Pinchot, William B. Greeley, Earl H. Clapp, Lyle F. Watts, and Edward P. Cliff.

There are some mistaken ideas about history. Most of us tend to think that history is pretty well settled, cut and dried, and worse, that it is dreary and dull--of interest only to a handfull of dedicated research scholars. Not so. Actually nearly everyone has some interest in history. Ample evidence of this exists in the fact that many books dealing with history have been popular successes. Notable among such are two best-sellers by Mrs. Barbara Tuckman on the origins and early history of World War I: The Guns of August and Proud Tower. Bruce Catton, another historian of popular sellers, is the author of a number of competent, highly readable books on the American Civil War. This is to say nothing of the numerous historical novels, dealing with some aspect of history.

We tend to think that history in its general outlines and significant events is all set and even fairly well known, that historical research is mainly a matter of filling in gaps with a few more facts that can easily be found somewhere. It is not quite so simple. If you reflect on it a moment, you will realize that out of the millions of events that occur in any era, or for that matter any 24-hour period, only a minute portion of them are ever written down. This gives some idea of the difficulty and challenge facing the historian in re-creating an event. It is done by gathering as many facts as possible and then going through a process historians call interpretation. And the line between "fact" and "interpretation" is often a thin one indeed. Besides, interpretation of events change over the years. In the detective work of finding the facts and in their interpretation lie opportunities for creativity in history, as well as challenge, change, and growth, as much so as in any of the physical and social sciences. So, don't be surprised if you get "hooked" on history. You may find that a subject you thought boring is in reality the most fascinating subject you ever delved into. All of this is true of Forest Service history. Its ramifications are enormous and far-reaching.

To All History Coordinators: As Ben Franklin said to the delegates at the closing session of the Constitutional convention, "you now have a Constitution--if you can keep it." We now have a Forest Service history program--if we can keep it, and keep it moving. And the coordinators are VIP's in this undertaking. At the same time, guidance and direction are essential. These --such as the new Manual Chapter (1680) and a History Plan--are being drafted, but they take thought and time. As you are probably aware, there are in the Manual under 1658 HISTORICAL DATA, requirements for keeping history files. In this interum, pending the issuance of new guidelines, please review the 1658 Section and be guided accordingly. Regardless of details, a Forest Service history program must take TWO BASIC DIRECTIONS: (1) BEGIN NOW by setting up a file labeled History (the unit concerned) 1971, and begin to regularly place into the file those papers or copies of documents that you know will be of historical significance in the future, including current reports, important letters, speeches, publications, newspaper clippings, interesting photographs, such as group meetings, personnel, buildings, new or special equipment, some record of large fires, and special events. In this way, we can at least avoid falling further behind, for without records there is no history. And (2) GO BACK TO THE PAST and do the best we can to gather facts and records of those events or eras that are not now well documented.

In regard to the past, one way of organizing our history files would be to attack it in chunks--set up files by eras, roughly by quarter centuries, such as:

1876-1905 (the Beginnings)
1905-1925 (Inc. WW I)
1925-1950 (Inc. WW II)
1950-1976

As documents, memorabilia are located, they could be placed in appropriate slots.

One thing to keep in mind about the past: You may have more and better records than you realize. If there is a record of what has been placed in Federal Regional Record Centers, check that out. If no record, check with your Record Center for an inventory of Forest Service records it already has. For example, the National Archives in Washington has large holdings of records from the Washington Office. Also, there are records here in the Library of Congress.

Another important item for all history files is the biographical statement on key people. These should be kept current and updated every two or three years. Then when the individual retires or leaves, you have some personal information about him and about his having served in a particular office or area.

Where is it? The R-3 Daily Bulletin that Arthur Ringland tells us was started in the Regional Office in 1908 and, he feels certain, continued publication for some 30 years. A complete set of this daily record would be a very important historical document for R-3. If anyone knows of a set, or any part of it, or where it might be found, please contact the History Branch.

President Nixon has issued an Executive Order directing all Federal agencies to provide leadership in preserving, restoring and maintaining the historic and cultural environment of the Nation. You will be hearing more on this from the WO, but in the meantime, it gives the history program an unexpected boost. Significant provisions are that Federal agencies shall no later than July 1, 1973, with the advice of the Secretary of the Interior, and in cooperation with the liaison officer for historic preservation for the State or Territory involved, locate, inventory, and nominate to the Secretary of the Interior all sites, buildings, districts, and objects under their jurisdiction or control that appear to qualify for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

Is the management of the George Washington National Forest clairvoyant? It may be, for the GWNF began in January (the E.O. was issued May 13, 1971) to develop a preservation plan for old landmarks that have historical significance. This came as a result of a study-tour of the GW by I&E Staff Officer Dinnie Lambert and Mr. Tucker Hill, Architectural historian for the Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission.

Coordinators: Of the 154 National Forests, we hope there may be more than five published histories, but that is the number we have on hand in the WO history branch. We have these: 50 Year History of the Monongahela, The Clearwater Story by Ralph S. Space, The Flathead Story by Charlie Shaw, The Nezperce Story by Albert N. Cochrell, and The Story of the Jefferson National Forest. If there are others, would you please send a copy for our reference shelf. Those we have are of high quality and speak well for the NF's concerned. As we draw nearer to 1976, there will be more and more need and demand for such histories.

We also have here bound typescripts of the following tape recorded interviews: William R. Schofield, Arthur C. Ringland, Earl S. Peirce, Thornton T. Munger, Woodbridge Metcalf, Walter F. McCulloch, Walter H. Lund, Krueger (Myron E.), Colgan (Richard A.) Leo Issac, R.C. Hall, H.B. Shepard, Christopher M. Granger, Tom Gill, Samuel T. Dana, Clepper, Pomeroy, and Hornaday, and S. Rexford Black. These are available on loan to any FS office.

In order to make better use of the references we now have, will all RO coordinators please send the History branch a bibliography of your present reference library. We will do the same for the WO books.

With this issue of History Line, we go to 3-hole punch in order to facilitate keeping them in ring-binders. Who knows, it too may be history someday, like tomorrow morning?

As an individual, you can participate in, and support Forest and FS history--by becoming a member of the Forest History Society, now located at Santa Cruz, Calf. Information on it will come to you with this issue of History Line.